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O 011250Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6409
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7618
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6305
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1706
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6315
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SUBJECT: DELHI SAYS U.S. PRESSURE RESPONSIBLE FOR
PAKISTAN'S ALLEGED TROOP DRAWDOWN

11. (U) Indian press began reporting on 30 April that Pakistan was moving 6,000 troops from its border with India to fight the Taliban in the west. The reports are based on an April 29 New York Times article citing an unnamed Pakistani official. One report also cited satellite images that it claimed confirmed the troop movement. Although Pakistan has not confirmed such action -- and according to one source, Islamabad denied the movement -- the Indian press and Post contacts are attributing the move to "intense U.S. pressure" and interpreting it as "Pakistan's way of demonstrating to Washington its seriousness to take on the Taliban."

Indians Play Down Significance of the Possible Troop Reduction

12. (SBU) The External Affairs Ministry has not yet issued a statement and M.E.A. officials were unable to confirm whether the movement had taken place. An M.E.A. Pakistan desk officer downplayed the significance of the alleged drawdown. While supporting troop redeployments from east to west would certainly help Pakistan take on terrorism, he said, it does not necessarily mean much for tensions along the Indo-Pak border, where the 6,000 troops constitute less than 10 percent of Pakistan's deployed forces. He also commented that the Indian Government had not noticed a large buildup on the Indo-Pak border in the last five months after the Mumbai terrorist attacks; the minor changes there were due to normal military exercises and there was no reason why Islamabad would not want to make this move.

13. (SBU) Indo-Pak expert and former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ambassador G. Parthasarthy, did not believe the Indian government would necessarily view such a reduction as a goodwill gesture by Pakistan and would be unlikely to offer praise. The troop movement, which he claimed to have "some confirmation" about, is being seen as Pakistan's response to American pressure and a return to pre-26/11 positions. Offering a parallel analysis, Indranil Banerjee, Director of an Indian think tank focusing on South Asian conflict studies, said "6,000 troops are a drop in the ocean," indicating it would not be interpreted by India as a confidence-building measure. A more significant confidence building measure would be a reduction in cross-border

infiltration, according to Banerjie.
BURLEIGH